1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32
Hill Maria
Bison Horn Maria

It is generally asserted that all Marias are dirty, and object to washing. It is true that Maria women dancing late at night after lying on ground covered with the ashes of camp-fires, or men and women in the *ponda* fields or after a long march, are dirty; and anyone who has tried to dress a Maria's wounds knows how dirt-encrusted they can be. Sleeping between fires, or over fires in an enclosed and low-roofed hut, does not promote cleanliness. But the real reason for the idea is the fact that the Hill Maria seldom washes his loin-cloth. On this, Russell and Hiralal say (III, p. 124):— 515

Cleanliness

'In Bastar they seldom wash their clothes, as they think this impious, or else that the cloth would wear out too quickly if it were often washed. Here they set great store by their piece of cloth, and a woman will take it off before she cleans up her house, and do her work naked. It is probable that these wild Gonds, who could not weave, regarded the cloth as something miraculous and sacred, and, as already seen, the god Palo is a piece of cloth.'

This passage is all wrong. Palo is unknown to Maria or Muria Murias and Bison-horn Marias wash their clothes, and there are occasions when even a Hill Maria is bound to do so. He may not weave, himself, but he makes nets and baskets and twine, and always accepts the manufacturing processes of Kumhar potters, Kammar blacksmiths, Gharwa brass founders or Mahra weavers in a commonsense, rational way; he sees the work done quite often, and indeed there are many Marias who, in jail for homicide, have themselves become expert weavers of cloth or carpets. The reasoning processes of the savage are not unlike our own, and it is always safe to reject any such explanation as that he does not wash his cloth because he regards it as impious to wash something so sacred and miraculous, when there is available the commonsense economic explanation that he himself gives, that cloth costs money, of which he has never much, and that the oftener it is washed the sooner it wears out. So ordinarily, when a Hill Maria has his dip in a pool or river he takes off his filthy and inadequate loin-cloth and hangs it on a bush or rock while he washes his limbs, fastening it again all dirty on his clean body when he emerges. The women remove their loin-cloth, but not their *mudang*[1] and the cloth attached to it. Both husband and wife, however, must bathe in the morning after sexual intercourse and wash their loin-cloths; and a woman must invariably bathe and wash her loin-cloth, beating it out well on a stone, on leaving the menstruation hut or room at the end of her courses and of the four weeks following the birth of a child. Generally men and women wash or bathe every morning, and more often than not in the evening also. There are separate pools in [285 286] [833] [841 846]

[1] The *mudang* is explained below, under dress.

1; Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32
Hill Maria

843 such as, in other parts of India, of the use of a knife or the cutting of anything; but ordinary enquiry elicited no clue to them.

844 It was said on page 106 that children are born in the menstruation hut or room. This is certainly the case so far as the private huts and rooms are concerned; but in my notes it is not clear whether births ever take place in the communal menstruation hut. They probably do not, because obviously it may be needed at any time for other women of the village, and I have notes of children in Hikpulla and Nugur, where there are communal menstruation huts, being born in a corner of the veranda of the house specially walled off for the purpose.

[777] Cases are known of a mother being delivered of a child in the fields or the forest, but this is considered very unlucky, and as soon as the mother knows that her hour is upon her, she must make every effort to get in time to the menstruation hut or room. During delivery she may have the comfort of the presence of her mother-in-law or some woman from the village; but there are no midwives, and the woman with her must not touch her or assist the delivery; the mother is expected to do everything for herself, and it is regarded as very wrong if she is unable to do so. They pray to the clan-god during a difficult delivery, but appear to do nothing else to assist the mother by either medicine or ceremony. The mother herself has to cut the navel-cord of her baby either with her husband's ordinary knife or with an arrow-head. She cuts it about three or four inches from its junction with the stomach, and binds it close to the junction with a ligature of cord, the portion between the cut and the ligature being left to dry and fall off; and she is expected to bury the placenta (*wodi*) immediately after this under the house rubbish-heap outside the back of the house. If the child is born dead, the mother has to bury it somewhere in the forest, going there alone and digging the grave without assistance; it may not be buried in the regular village graveyard. Around Handawada a mother is expected to stay in the menstruation room for a full month after delivery; but the general rule in the interior of the Abujhmar hills is for her to remain there for eight days or until the navel-cord dries and falls off.

[845 766]

846 Everywhere it is taboo for the father to do any field or other work during this period of eight days before the navel-cord falls. No medicine is given to him. He must not sleep in the house during the period in most parts of the hills, but in the dormitory; around Handawada he sleeps in the portion of the *kala* room separated from the woman's portion by the *hinda* mud threshold. He must not cook his own food during this period, and has to get a man friend to cook food for him in another house and bring it to

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32
Hill Maria

him. He has, however, to cook food for his wife. The latter during ordinary menstrual periods stays, in villages where there are menstrual rooms or private and not communal menstruation huts, on her side of the mud threshold and keeps there special water-pots and cooking pots; her husband brings food and water in the regular pots, and, standing on his non-taboo side of the mud threshold, pours their contents into the menstruation water and cooking pots. But as he may never touch the latter, he cannot use them for preparing food for his wife after child-birth, and so has to buy a special set of pots for cooking her food then, which are destroyed at the end of her period of seclusion. Nor is the husband permitted to enter the ordinary rooms of the house until the child's navel-cord has fallen off; he has to build a temporary room at the back of the house near the menstruation room or hut, and cook there. It is taboo for him to give any other person any fire from the hearth in this temporary kitchen. Breach of the taboos attaching to child-birth by either parent is believed to entail the wrath of the Village Mother. During the period of seclusion the mother is permitted to leave the room only to bury the placenta or to answer the call of nature. As it is taboo for her to pick or break anything growing during the period, she has before her delivery to lay in enough leaves for cleaning herself after defecation to last for the full period. She wears nothing but the *mudang* until the end of the period.

After the navel-cord has fallen off or at the end of the period of seclusion, the mother goes out at night to the river, immerses herself, and cleans her old loin-cloth and the cloth of her *mudang*. In the early morning she emerges wearing her loin-cloth and carrying her baby, which in most villages her husband then sees for the first time; around Handawada, however, he is allowed to see it in the menstruation room on the morning after it is born. The mother has to sprinkle every part of the house with water.

From birth to death there is no age ceremony of any kind, neither at birth, naming, weaning, ear-boring, hair-cutting, puberty, first shaving, nor on any other occasion. Normally

Naming

the child gets no name until it is two or three years old, when its parents know its physique and something of its character. But there are three exceptions to this. When the child is brought out from the place where it was born at the end of the initial period of seclusion, it is examined for birth-marks; and if these are considered to be the same as those of a dead ancestor it is given that ancestor's name, or, if, for example, the child is a boy and has his father's mother's birth-marks, it gets her husband's name. Thus Usendi Moda, the headman of Orcha, was called after his dead grandfather because he had the same mole on his hip as he;

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32
Hill Maria
Bison Horn Maria

844 seat above it. Near by he drives the arrow or knife into the ground. He brings a pot of water and puts it inside the hut; should the water [787] decrease of its own accord it is regarded as a very bad omen and the child is expected to die. This hut is now used constantly by the mother who comes five or six times a day to bathe herself and the baby. She always takes water from the pot kept inside the enclosure and it is refilled each time with warm water heated elsewhere. The mother regularly pours warm water over the child's umbilical stump, for so long as it does not drop off she is in a state of taboo and can do no work.

In some villages the placenta is buried under a *bassia latifolia* tree and a large stone is placed above, 'for this tree does every kind of work for us'. Very small babies are sometimes buried in the same place so that they can suck the milky sap.

When the stump falls off, it is buried in the placenta-pit; should it be dug up and eaten, for example, by a dog, the child would cease suckling and die. After a year has passed the Perma comes to offer compensation of a fowl and rice-beer to the Earth Mother because they have offended her by burying the placenta and cord in the ground.

846 Once the stump has dropped the mother is free of the restrictions on her and when she feels ready—'when her body is dry and 852 clean'—she has a final bath, cowdungs the house and begins to cook and live normally again. The father shaves the child's head. The mother herself destroys the little bathing-hut. The father smears the arrow with oil and puts it in the roof of the house. When a boy grows up it is shown to him and he can use it for hunting, though no special virtue seems to attach to it.

852 On the day of the mother's ceremonial entry into the house, there is a little feast, cooked by the woman herself, on the veranda. 553 The Perma and a few neighbours are invited and they have a pot of rice-beer. Before they drink, each of the visitors dips his finger into it and gives it to the child to suck. The mother presents oil and a ring to each of the women who helped her and to the Waddai and Perma. The child is often, though not always, named on this occasion. A chicken is dedicated by being fed on rice and is set free. A year later it is sacrificed and a bit of the liver is given to the child. If a baby cries continually it is supposed that it has been given the wrong name and the Waddai renames it and dedicates another chicken. In Gadapal I was told that if the gods disapprove a child's name, they send Hidmaraj to make it itch and Markaraj to make it cry.

845 The Marias do not seem to have made up their minds about twins. One village thinks them lucky, another disastrous. There

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32

Bison Horn Maria

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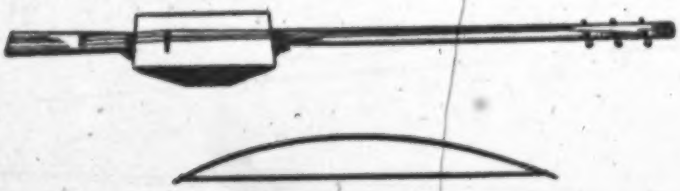
Verrier Elwin

Bison-horn Maria mother with her newly-born child at Maranda. Note the arrow driven into the ground where the placenta is buried, and the stone for bathing

[End Plate P]

3: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1943
AW32 Gond AW32
Bison Horn Maria

534 bamboo and the usual flute. They are fond of gongs, but these are not now so common as they were. At the great Pen Karsita at Ghotpal in 1942, the dancers used slabs of



Kikir Fiddle
(*Length 2'*)

coloured wood, bits of old tin and indeed anything that would make a noise instead of the traditional gongs. Like the Muria, at festivals and even for amusement the Maria use a hunting horn, either a real horn or one made of brass.

541 Besides dancing, the chief Maria relaxation is the cock-fight. At the conclusion of all the bigger bazaars, the men retire to a grove of trees and set their cocks against each other. The cocks are armed with sharp and deadly little knives tied to their feet and fights are to the death. The victor has the privilege of taking the defeated bird, but the real excitement comes from the betting.

V

844 [843] The ceremonies attending birth and marriage are very simple. The pregnant mother is not hampered by many restrictions on her movements. After the birth of the child the placenta is buried in a pit behind the house. Logs are placed above it and the arrow with which the cord was cut is driven into the ground near by. A small shed is made and the 846 mother lives here for some weeks with her child, taking a daily bath above the placenta-pit. At the end of this period of segregation, the husband gives a feast to the neighbours, [551] the child is named and the mother is permitted to return to her household duties. It was to such a feast that the unhappy victim of the Mardum sacrifice was enticed.[1]

881 There are no ceremonies of initiation at puberty, though a

[1] Case No 31.